

Brahma Sutra – Chatussutri

Any knowledge is achieved through particular means (instrument of knowledge) which are termed as Pramaanas. The simple pramana that is used for all worldly knowledge is pratyaksha or perception. The ultimate pramana that is accepted by those philosophies who believe the Vedas is the Veda or sruthi. Any means or pramana should be devoid of faults so that the knowledge achieved is also right knowledge and without any fault. A person sees two moon at a particular time – this is not right knowledge because there are no moons but only one moon. In this case, the two moons are known through perception which is faulty as it is sublated by the higher knowledge of scripture that there is only one moon (scriptures mention about moon and other planets in astrology or jyotisha which is one of the six angas or limbs of Vedas).

Vedas are the ultimate or final pramana because it is without any faults. It is without any fault because it is without any creator but is revealed by the ultimate reality of Brahman to the first manifestation of Brahma (according to Vedantins veda is apaurusheya or without any creator but according to Naiyyayikas veda is created by God – in both the cases since God or Brahman are without any faults, Vedas are without any faults).

The Vedas consist of two parts – the karma kaanda which consists of various upasanaas and rituals useful for purification of the mind and the jnaana kaanda or knowledge part which consists of Upanishads that propound the ultimate reality of Brahman – one without a second and that by knowing which everything else is known.

The Upanishads are also called Vedanta as they form the last part of the Vedas and as they denote culmination of knowledge (veda is knowledge and antha means end or termination – it is in Upanishads that knowledge ends as everything becomes known by knowing the ultimate reality of Brahman and after knowing Brahman there remains nothing else to be known).

The philosophy which is based on the Upanishads is termed the philosophy of Vedanta or Vedanta darshanam or simply Vedanta.

There are six systems which either follow the Vedas as the authority or accept God. These are:

1. Nyaaya system of Gautama Muni
2. Vaisheshika system of Kanaada Muni
3. Sankhya system of Kapila Muni
4. Yoga system of Patanjali Muni
5. Purva Mimamsa of Jaimini Muni (this is based on the Karma Kaanda of Vedas)
6. Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta of Baadaraayana (who is better known as Veda Vyaasa)

There are differences between each of these systems which require exhaustive study for understanding them. It is enough to remember that each of this system tries to find out the cause of sorrow and sufferings in the world and the way out of this sorrow. It is in Vedanta that all knowledge culminates and the real goal of removal of sorrow and sufferings is achieved.

Satya Sameeksha (commentary on Satya Darshanam) deals with two of the systems and the way theory of creation is treated in them. It can be referred if required.

Vedanta system is based on prasthaana trayam or the three different books or works which propound the Vedanta system.

These are:

1. Sruthi Prasthaana (scriptural work) – Upanishads (principal Upanishads are 10 which have been commented by Sankaracharya and other acharyaas – Upanishad Brahmdendra has commented on 108 Upanishads which are mentioned in the Muktikopanishad)
2. Smrithi Prasthaana (work arising out of memory or intellect) – Bhagavad Gita
3. Nyaaya or Sutra Prasthaana (work based on logic and harmony of Upanishadic statements) – Brahma Sutra

Since Brahma Sutra harmonizes the various Upanishadic statements which seem to be contradictory in nature and in a way summarizes the Vedantic system, it is very useful for a seeker to contemplate and assimilate the Vedanta system and to realize the ultimate reality of Brahman.

What is a sutra?

A sutra is an aphorism which is very concise, short, to the point but yet having essential description or explanation.

Brahma Sutra has 555 sutras in total as per Sankaracharya. The first four sutras are very important in that it is the essence of entire Brahma Sutra – these four are called Chatussutri (meaning four sutras) Brahma Sutra. The rest of the Brahma sutra is an explanation and elucidation of these four sutras only.

Here, we are going to just analyze the four sutras briefly for fear of being too exhaustive and so that everyone will be able to go through it and assimilate the meaning.

Brahma Sutra – Contents

Brahma Sutra consists of 4 Chapters. Each Chapter is again split into 4 sections or paadas. Each paada or section is again split into various topics or adhikaranaas. There are in total 191 adhikaranas or topics.

The 4 Chapters of Brahma Sutra are:

1. Samanvaya Adhyaaya – various upanishadic statements are harmonized with the ultimate reality of Brahman as the subject or centre matter.
2. Avirodha Adhyaaya – upanishadic statements about Brahman are proved through logic or yukthi through refutation of other rival philosophies of Sankhya, Yoga, Bauddha, Jaina, Pancharaathra etc.
3. Saadhana Adhyaaya – path to the ultimate reality
4. Phala Adhyaaya – effect of realizing the ultimate reality mainly jeevanmukthi or liberation while embodied and videhamukthi or liberation after the body is disposed.

Commentaries on Brahma Sutra

The primary commentary as well as the oldest commentary on Brahma Sutra (which is available at present) is the commentary of Sankaracharya termed as Brahma Sutra Bhashya or Shareeraka Bhashya (Brahma Sutra is also termed as Shareeraka sutra as it is about Brahman even as the body encompasses the Self or Atman).

The list of sub commentaries on Sankara's Brahma Sutra Bhashya (in short BSB) are exhaustive and main ones alone are given below (the below are sub commentaries on Sankaracharya's commentary).

1. Bhamathi of Vachaspathi Mishra
2. Nyaaya Nirnaya of Anandagiri
3. Bhashya Rathna Prabha of Govindananda
4. Bhashya bhaava prakaashika of Chitsukhaacharya
5. Panchapaadika of Padmapaada acharya (one of the senior and direct disciples of Sankaracharya)

Another important work which expounds the topic in each adhikarana in 2 slokas each is the Adhikarana Ratna Maala of Bharathi Teertha Swamigal of sringeri (this work is also based on Sankara's BSB).

Yet another work which encompasses or summarizes Sankara's BSB is the Sankshepa Sareeraka of Sarvajnaatman Muni.

The below are the sub commentaries available on Bhamathi of Vachaspathi Mishra:

1. Kalpatharu of Amalaananda
Parimala of Appayya Dikshitar (sub commentary on Kalpatharu)
Abhoga of Lakshmi Nrsimha (sub commentary on Kalpatharu)
2. RjuPrakaashika of Akandhaananda Yati

The below are the commentary list which are on the Panchapaadika of Padmapaada acharya (not all are mentioned as there are many commentaries on the same):

1. Prabhodha Parishodini of Atmasvaroopaacharya
2. Tatparya Dyotini of Vijnanaatman
3. Panchapaadika Vivarana of Prakaashaatman
Tattvadipana of Akhadananda Saraswathi
Rjuvivarana of sarvajnavishnu
Taatparya dipika of Chitsukhacharya
Bhaava prakaashika of Nrsimhaacharya

A person need not be worried or surprised hearing the names of the above works – all these works explain in detail what Sankaracharya explains very briefly. The meaning or import is the same in all these works. The import or the goal is more important than the path which is being followed. Even if the path is wrong, one will reach the goal but the time taken will be more as the seeker will realize that the path is wrong and then will go through the right path (if he doesn't know the right path itself, he will search for the path and will get it from a Guru). But for a person who has the goal itself wrong, there will be no reaching the goal as he will always be searching or going towards something else.

Hence, the goal or the ultimate reality of Brahman is important than anything else in the world. Even the Vedantic statements are important than the ultimate reality of Brahman and the ultimate reality which Sankara propounded in half sloka:

1. Brahma Satyam
2. Jagan Mithya
3. Jeeva brahmaiva na parah

1. Brahman is the ultimate reality
2. The world is an illusion in the ultimate reality of Brahman
3. Hence the individual Self is Brahman only and not different from it

The Ultimate reality – an analysis

The ultimate reality is Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss absolute – one without a second. When the experience of the world is analysed, there will be only two entities in the final stage of analysis. The two entities are CHIT or Consciousness and JADA or insentient objects. CHIT or Consciousness is ONE or non-dual but JADA are many and innumerable.

CHIT is the ultimate reality whereas JADA is only an illusion in the reality of CHIT. JADA has no existence apart from CHIT whereas CHIT exists even when JADA is not there.

The reality between two entities is known or analyzed through the Anvaya-Vyatireka Yukthi or logic of co-existence and co-absence.

Let's take an example of two entities of A and B:

Anvaya yukthi – if A is there, B is there.

Vyatireka yukthi – if A is not there, B is not there.

Taking the simple example of A as constant and B as variable:

Anvaya yukthi – if constant is there, the variable is there.

Vyatireka yukthi – if constant is not there, the variable is not there.

The above logic shows that constant is independent whereas the variable is dependent on the constant for its existence. Also the variable has no existence at all as at any point of time, there exist only the constant. Therefore variable is only an illusion seen in the reality of constant (illusion is that which seems to exist in its substratum – the water seems to exist in the substratum of desert but never really exists).

Similarly using the logic for CHIT as A and JADA as B:

Anvaya yukthi – if CHIT or Consciousness is there, the insentient objects are there.

Vyatireka yukthi – if CHIT or Consciousness is not there, the insentient objects are not there.

The above shows that JADA vasthus depend on Consciousness for their existence. Hence the insentient objects which are denoted by the word "world" or "jagat" are only mere illusions in the ultimate reality of CHIT which is one without a second.

Can't there be multiple Consciousness as we see various conscious jeevas or individuals?

No. There can never be multiple Consciousness as Consciousness is the subject of all objects. The subject can never become an object (an object can never be both the subject and object because any object is insentient and Consciousness is never insentient). Hence, there is only one Consciousness which shines through each and every individual who is composed of the intellect (or inner equipments) and the body. The one Consciousness is reflected in the intellect and this reflected Consciousness is called jeeva. Jeevas or reflected Consciousness is many depending on the various reflecting mediums of intellect. But from the ultimate view, even the reflection is nothing but the original alone and hence the jeevas are also nothing but the non-dual Consciousness alone. They seem to be different when the illusory reflecting medium seems to be present. When the medium is known to be unreal, then the reflected Consciousness also vanishes and there remains only the non-dual Consciousness, one without a second.

Thus, the ultimate reality is that there is nothing here but only Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss absolute. All other things or duality that is perceived is only an illusion in the ultimate reality of Consciousness. As any illusion is nothing but the substratum alone – even as water seen in desert is perception of desert only – the world that is perceived is Brahman alone as the substratum.

Thus, the ultimate reality is that there is no duality here – the world is only an illusion – the ultimate reality is the non-dual Brahman – every one is Brahman only and not different from it as there is no duality here but only the ultimate reality of Brahman exists, one without a second.

Remembering this ultimate reality of non-dual Consciousness which is one's own very nature (but forgotten due to ignorance of one's own very nature of Consciousness), we will enter into the Brahma Sutra.

Adhyaasa or Superimposition

Adi Sankara bhagavatpada has written a crisp introductory commentary to his Brahma Sutra Bhashya. This introductory bhashya or commentary is termed Adhyaasa Bhashya as the main topic dealt here is Adhyaasa or superimposition. This sets the platform for exposition of the entire Brahma Sutra Bhashya.

What is Adhyaasa?

Adhyaasa or superimposition is identifying an object to be some other object (which it really is not). A person sees rope and identifies it to be a snake. This is the simplest and best example of superimposition. The snake is not at all present in the rope but still it is perceived in the rope. Similarly the Self or Consciousness is identified or wrongly known as the body, mind etc. by superimposing the body and mind on the Self. The Self and the insentient objects ranging from the body, mind and the external objects are contradictory in nature. Hence superimposition of one on the other is not at all possible. But still we experience the superimposition in the empirical usage that "I am this, these are mine" etc. This superimposition is due to ignorance about the reality.

When the reality of rope is not known, then the snake is superimposed on the rope. This superimposition has its cause in ignorance about the rope. Similarly it is ignorance about one's own very nature of Self or Consciousness which causes a

person to identify himself with the body and other insentient objects. These insentient objects are mere illusions in the reality of Self or Consciousness which is one without a second. The ignorance about one's own real nature is the cause of superimposition and the way out of this superimposition is negation of the wrong notions (termed as apavaada) by knowledge about the reality of Self from the Guru and the scriptures.

Even when superimposition is there, the Self remains without any change even as the rope remains without any change and just as a mere witness when the snake is perceived in the rope. When the reality is known that "I am the Self", then the ignorance completely vanishes and thus its effect of superimposition also vanishes. At that time, the Self realizes that there never was any superimposition or ignorance – whatever really existed was the Self alone, one without a second.

The study of scriptures as well as the main purport of the Brahma Sutra is realization of one's own real nature by removing the ignorance about one's own real nature which causes superimposition.

Any scripture has four things to be explained in the beginning of the work. They are called Anubandha Chathustayam. They are

1. Adhikaari – the person eligible for learning the work – the person who is being aimed at by the work
2. Vishaya – Subject matter of the work
3. Prayojana – effect or fruit of learning the work (the phalam of the work)
4. Sambhanda – relation between the Vishaya and Prayojana

The very first sutra of Brahma Sutra gives the details of Anubandha Chathustayam. Let us enter into the first sutra of Brahma Sutra.

As we have learnt that Brahma Sutra consists of topics which will have many sutras in it, the first adhikarana is the jijnaasa adhikarana which has one sutra in it. This sutra is the very first sutra of Brahma Sutra.

It is to be remembered that all the first four sutras of Brahma Sutras are in four different adhikaranas.

1. Jijnaasa adhikarana
2. Janmaadyasyaadhikarana
3. Shaastrayonitvaadhikarana
4. Samanvayaadhikarana

1.1.1 Atha athah brahma jijnaasa

Atha – Now

Athah – therefore

Brahma jijnaasa – let us desire to know Brahman (an enquiry into Brahman).

Now therefore, let us desire to know Brahman.

There are two words which are considered to be the very first words uttered by the creator Brahma. These are Atha and OM. Therefore these two are considered as Mangala words – words which denote peace. Atha or the word "Now" is normally used to indicate the Adhikaari or the person who is being aimed by the work. But Sankara says that here NOW doesn't mean Adhikaari but it means "after doing some

things” or Anantharyartham. It means that after one has done some things or acquired some pre requisite qualities. Here the pre requisite qualities are termed in Vedanta as the Saadhana Chathustayam or the four fold qualities of a seeker which are very essential to ensure that the knowledge is completely assimilated by the seeker in its entirety.

The word NOW cannot mean the person who is eligible for the knowledge because everybody is knowingly or unknowingly seeking the Self in the form of happiness or eternal bliss. And since the Self which is being sought out is one’s own very nature, therefore everybody is eligible to seek the knowledge or eligible to learn the Brahma Sutra (as well as the Upanishads or Vedanta in short).

Let us now learn the sadhana chathustayam so that we will be completely eligible to assimilate the ultimate reality that there is nothing here but Brahman alone which is one’s own very nature.

As the very name suggests, it is a set of four qualities which are essential for a seeker (and the things to be practiced by a sadhaka or seeker) so that he may be able to grasp the ultimate reality of his own very nature of Self or Consciousness. The Sadhana Chathustayam are:

1. Viveka – Discrimination between real and unreal
2. Vairaagya – Dispassion towards sense objects
3. Shatka sampattih – six qualities of the mind (mental control qualities)
4. Mumukshutva – Burning desire for liberation

1. Viveka – Discrimination between real and unreal

Reality is ONE alone, without any second thing. Thus the ultimate reality of Brahman or Self is non-dual. Hence from the ultimate view point, everything apart from Brahman is unreal as they don’t really exist but only seem to exist for a temporary time from the empirical view point. Unless a person discriminates between the real and the unreal, there are chances that he might seek the unreal. When the seeker seeks the unreal, he is not bound to get eternal happiness which is being sought out & he will be getting only sorrows and sufferings arising out of craving and attachment to the unreal object. Thus it is essential to know what is real and what is unreal. Once the real is known, then a seeker always tries to attain or get the real as he is guaranteed to get eternal bliss from the real. This discrimination between real and unreal is termed as Viveka and is the foremost of the qualities of a seeker. This is foremost because all other qualities depend upon this quality alone. Unless a person knows what is real and what is unreal, he will not have dispassion towards the unreal and seek the real. Thus, Vairaagya or dispassion is not completely possible without Viveka or discrimination between real and unreal.

What is REAL and what is UNREAL?

As mentioned, anything apart from Brahman is unreal. Thus Brahman alone is real – the world and its object ranging from a piece of mud to the creator Brahma are all unreal as they don’t really exist. The objects seem to exist for the time being but vanish once the ultimate reality of Brahman is realized. Anything which exists for the three time periods of past, present and future is termed as REAL. Anything which doesn’t exist for the three time periods is termed as UNREAL. But the world and its objects do exist for the present time and hence they cannot be termed UNREAL. Hence these are termed as illusory. Any illusion seems to exist for the present time when the illusion is being perceived. Once the substratum of the illusion is known,

the reality is known that the illusion never existed (it was non-existent for the three time periods). When the snake is seen in the rope, it is an illusion. But when the rope is known as such, then the reality is known that the snake is UNREAL and not an illusion. Thus from the ultimate view point, the world is UNREAL but from the empirical and ignorant's view point the world is ILLUSION.

Anything unreal or illusion cannot give eternal happiness as the object itself is temporary. Any temporary object cannot be possessed eternally and happiness from the object is derived only when the object exists. Hence any temporary object can never give eternal happiness or bliss. Therefore a seeker should always identify the real and the unreal – thereby seeking the real and rejecting the unreal.

The quality of discriminating the unreal objects of the world and the real entity of Brahman or Self or Consciousness is termed Viveka.

Practice of VIVEKA or DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN REAL AND UNREAL

A seeker should always remember that Brahman or Self alone is real and all other things are only like the objects in dream world (unreal once the dreamer wakes up).

2. Vairaagya or DISPASSION

Each and every moment the human mind is always behind the sense objects which are unreal (as has already been explained). This is to be stopped. The quality of not craving for the external sense objects is termed as Vairaagya.

Vairaagya is of two types: Apra Vairaagya (lower Vairaagya) and Para Vairaagya (higher dispassion). Apra Vairaagya is dispassion towards the sense objects due to one reason or the other (it may be due to one's beloved passing away or being dejected with life itself). Para Vairaagya is dispassion towards the sense objects because of attachment to the ultimate reality of Brahman. This is real Vairaagya and what is to be aimed at. Apra Vairaagya need not necessarily lead one to the ultimate reality of Brahman but Para Vairaagya definitely leads a seeker to realization of his own very nature of Brahman.

Real Vairaagya happens when Viveka has been cultivated. When a person knows the real and the unreal, then he doesn't crave the unreal (not because he is dejected with the objects but because he knows them to be unreal and hence they cannot give him eternal happiness) as he craves for the eternal bliss in the eternal Self or Brahman.

PS: There are four types of Apra Vairaagya which will be dealt in another exhaustive commentary on the Chatussutri Brahma Sutra).

Practice of VAIRAGYA or DISPASSION

A seeker should always be attached to the ultimate reality of Brahman (once he discriminates the real from the unreal) and thereby not crave for the unreal objects in the unreal world.

3. Shatka Sampatti – the SIX TREASURES relating to control of mind

The six qualities of the mind are:

SHAMA or calmness of the mind
DAMA or control of sense organs
UPARATHI or withdrawal of sense organs
TITIKSHA or endurance
SRADDHA or faith (in the scriptures and the Guru)
SAMAADHANAM or tranquility of the mind

SHAMA is calmness of the mind. This is related to control of the thoughts of the mind. This is achieved through not making the mind go to sense objects by constantly making it contemplate on the Self rather than the sense objects. Sankara says in Vivekachoodamani that this can be achieved by constantly finding faults in the external sense objects (here faults means the problems and limitedness of the sense objects – the knowledge that external sense objects can never give a person eternal bliss & that they are temporary and will vanish any moment).

Sri Krishna defines the world and the way out of the world beautifully in half a sloka in Chapter 9.33

Anityam asukham lokam imam praapya bhajasvas maam

This world is temporary (anityam) and sorrowful (asukham). Having attained this world, seek me completely by constantly thinking about ME.

DAMA or control of sense organs

Internal control of the mind (meaning control of the thoughts of the mind) alone will not help. Hence a person has to constantly control the sense organs (which are the instruments for perception of sense objects) by fixing them to their respective spheres of working (making the eye see properly and correct things rather than making it see unwanted things which will lead to more and more bondage – one simple way would be to see GOD everywhere, wherever the eye goes).

UPARATTI or withdrawal of sense organs

When the internal and external mind (internal mind being thoughts & external mind being the instruments which are called sense organs) are controlled, then it is very easy to withdraw the sense organs and thereby try to stop external perception. By this, the mind becomes introverted & such a mind alone is capable of realizing its own very source of Self or Consciousness. As various saints have proclaimed, realization is possible only when the mind is introverted and never when the mind is extroverted and constantly seeking the external sense objects.

TITIKSHA or forbearance or endurance

It happens that when a seeker is progressing in the spiritual path, something not very conducive to his spiritual sadhana happens. When such things happen, the seeker should not lose his patience and get angry. Instead he should take those things or incidents as a test of his spiritual progress. This quality of forbearance is very important because the path of spirituality is like walking along the edges of a razor. It might surely happen that at a particular moment, the seeker is tested strongly for his spiritual maturity. The moment the seeker doesn't take those challenges properly, all his spiritual practices become waste as he is not able to test them during times of challenges. It is very easy for a person to talk that "I am the

Self, I am unaffected" etc. when the times/conditions/environment is conducive and good for the seeker. But this is being done even by worldly people. Hence there is no difference between both. The real test comes when the situations are against the seeker and the seeker is thoroughly tested (meaning that the seeker gets situations which are worse to him – which may shatter his mental balance also and his mind might become very weak or sad). It is at that time that a real seeker should be able to say that "I am the Self, I am the Kutastha – witness of everything and hence I am unaffected by the illusory world plus its activities". Here a seeker might not be able to really put it into action directly but he should be able to endure such tough conditions by either seeking the Self (and overcoming the tough time) or by seeking the Lord. A jnaani always behaves the same way but for a jnaani, there is no overcoming here as the passions of the mind are always under control. But for a seeker, the mind becomes weak but still he controls it through practice. This quality of enduring any conditions or environments or situations is termed as forbearance or endurance. This is very important for a seeker.

SRADDHA or Faith in the scriptures and the words of Guru

Till now whatever has been told are related to the mind and not to the Self. All the previous four qualities are for controlling the mind so that it can concentrate on the ultimate reality of Brahman by contemplating on it.

Brahman is being clearly propounded only in the scriptures. Scriptures are apaurusheya or without any origin (they are just revealed to Brahma at the time of start of creation) and hence without any fault. They are the experience of various saints and have been tested by innumerable people from time immemorial. Scriptures might not be easily accessible for a normal and initial seeker. This is more in the case of today as most of us are unable to interpret or understand the language of Sanskrit which is the base for the scriptures. Hence the need and importance of a Guru comes into picture. Swami Chinmayananda beautifully puts it that the scriptures are indirect knowledge whereas Guru is direct knowledge because scriptures have to be tested by putting into practice whereas the Guru is one who shows the disciple how to practice the scriptural teachings in life and thereby realize the Self.

But these are days when we find Gurus all over the country preaching whatever little has been learnt by them (and at times not even putting them into practice) hence it is the duty of a disciple to ascertain through the scriptures, logic and experience whether whatever the Guru preaches is right or wrong. A seeker cannot claim here that since I don't know the scriptures, I cannot find out whether the Guru is right or wrong because everybody is endowed with logic and the words of the Guru can be tested as to whether it is logical or not. Also there are innumerable translations of the Upanishads which can be resorted to. If another objection comes here that various Vedantic schools interpret the Upanishads differently and how can a seeker find out which one is correct, then it is very simple as to what is to be done in that case. A seeker has to test the interpretations also to logic. For example, if the interpretations of Gita say that Sri Krishna is the form and not the ultimate reality of Nirguna Brahman, then it is faulty and illogical. This is so because any form is subject to change and death which would mean that Brahman will die. Also forms limit the unlimited Brahman which is impossible and hence the teaching is illogical. Thus a seeker can reject such interpretations.

Also any Guru who when questioned rebukes at the disciple is not a real Guru. Any real Guru will be asking the disciple to test the scriptures as well as his words for logical issues before asking him to believe and practice it.

Sri Krishna himself says in the 18th Chapter to Arjuna

Ithi te jnaanam aakhyaatam guhyaat guhyataram mayaa
Vimrishyetat asheshena yatha icchasi tathaa kuru

Thus I have instructed you the knowledge which is the secret of all secrets (as it is Brahma Vidya knowing which everything becomes known). Don't believe it blindly but analyze and enquire into it completely (Asheshena means completely and fully) and then whatever you feel you do.

The words "YATHA ICCHASI TATHAA KURU" – whatever you think is correct, do it – is very important because that is what describes a real Guru. A real Guru will show the disciple the right and the wrong path. But he will not force the disciple to follow the right path instead he will give the choice or option to the disciple alone.

Thus any Guru will be open to logical Samvaada through which the disciple can ascertain whether the Guru is really speaking the scriptural statements only or not.

Even this much introspection is not at all required, a Guru will always be filled with bliss and his actions will always be for the welfare of the society. Any seeker who is open-minded can feel the bliss emanating from such a Guru in the Guru's presence. The mind will become calm when the seeker approaches the Guru.

As we have now understand how to identify the Guru and get access to the scriptures which are the final authority on any spiritual matter in the world, let us know see what FAITH is.

St. Augustine, the Christian mystic, defines ***FAITH as belief in something which you don't know so that you may come to know what you believe.***

Many Vedantins might rebuke against such definitions and the so-called rationalists might say that blind-faith should not be resorted to. But let us analyze what AMMA says about Blind-Faith.

A person goes to bed at night with the belief that he might wake up the next day in the same place ☺ It is never necessary that it should happen that way. Isn't this itself a blind-faith?

A person boards a train from Delhi to go to Haridwar with the belief that the train will take him to Haridwar. It might happen that on the way itself some accident happens & thus the person doesn't reach Haridwar. Isn't such a belief itself blind-faith only?

It is a naked truth that all beliefs are BLIND alone. There is no other faith than BLIND-FAITH in the world. The world itself is based on blind-faith. We believe that the world will survive the next moment but it might happen that Tsunami comes and destroys the entire world!

As for the rationalists, the scriptural statements also are blind-faith only but it has been tested by innumerable people. Also it is not beyond logic but it is supported and

ascertained by logic. What logic can be given about the rotation of the Earth around the Sun??? Nothing except that it is gravitation or some other scientific reasons which can never withstand the logical analysis of either the Nyaaya system or Vedanta.

It is said that the great scientist Einstein came to Delhi (at his time of exile) and read the Adhyaasa Bhashya of Adi Sankaracharya. After reading it, he exclaimed that I have wasted 40 years without knowing this!!!!

It is very important for a seeker to have faith in the scriptures and Guru. The path of spirituality is not such that within one day or one month realization dawns. It all depends on the seeker and his level. It might happen that realization happens this very moment or it is even possible that it will take 50 long years for realization or even 2-3 births. Thus a seeker should not lose heart but still follow the spiritual path with full earnestness. For a slight improvement or progress, it might take years and hence the seeker should not lose faith in the scriptures but continue to follow until the final goal of ultimate reality of Brahman or Self is achieved. As the English saying goes "Stop not until the goal is reached", one should always have faith and move forward in the path of spirituality.

SAMAADHANAM or Tranquility of mind

When the mind is totally controlled and faith is there in the scriptures, then the seeker should contemplate on the ultimate reality. When the seeker tries to contemplate on the reality at all points of time, then his mind becomes tranquil and calm (equipoise). This quality of the mind when it completely rests in the ultimate reality of Brahman is termed as Samaadhanam

Practice of SHATKA SAMPATTI

- 1. SAMA or calmness of mind – always think in the mind the illusory and sorrowful nature of the world**
- 2. DAMA or control of sense organs – always try to see the right things and whatever is required or useful (seeing here also means the other sense organs too).**
- 3. UPARATTI – Avoid the extroverted nature of the sense organs instead make them introverted by contemplating on the reality**
- 4. TITIKSHA – Always remember that the PATH is walking along the edges of a razor and there will be constant testing of one's progress by the LORD.**
- 5. SRADDHA – Once the right Guru has been identified or the scripture's proper interpretation has been ascertained through logic and experience, have complete FAITH in them and practice them continuously and ceaselessly.**
- 6. SAMAADHANAM – Always contemplate on the ultimate reality of Brahman in the mind. Always try to perform Nidhidhyaasanam or contemplation whatever may be the external work being done.**

4. Mumukshutvam – burning desire for liberation

The fourth and final quality which is essential for a seeker so that he clearly and correctly grasps the ultimate reality of Brahman through scriptural hearing, reflecting and contemplation is MUMUKSHUTVAM.

What is Mumukshutvam?

Mokthum iccha mumukshuta – the desire to get liberated is called Mumukshuta

Mumukshuta yasya sah mumukshu – he is a mumukshu or seeker of liberation who has mumukshuta or the desire to get liberated.

Mumukshutvam is the quality of being a mumukshu or being a seeker who desires liberation. Desire has different levels in it. A child may desire toffees; a youth may also desire toffees but the degree or level which these two desires are different. The desire of a child is not that strong whereas the desire of the youth is very strong. This can be understood easily as the child can be easily diverted away from the toffees by giving something else whereas the youth cannot be diverted.

Brahman is something which is beyond words and thoughts. Since it is beyond the sense organs, mind and intellect, in order to realize Brahman a seeker has to put lot of effort in the form of tapas or austerity and high levels of concentration towards the spiritual disciplines. A seeker will be able to put lot of effort so that the mind goes beyond words and thoughts into its own source of Self to realize the ultimate reality of Brahman only if the desire for liberation is very strong – not a light desire which may fluctuate or vanish when something else attractive is found. Thus Swami Chinmayananda beautifully interprets Mumukshutvam as the “burning desire for liberation”. Burning desire here means the earnestness and impatience to attain it this very moment. Only when a person really desires an object can he attain that object. Similarly in the case of Brahman also, there should be desire for liberation. This should be strong because it has to overcome all attachment and desires for the worldly objects. When there are attraction towards worldly objects, there is not the attraction towards Brahman & Brahman is not known. When Brahman is known, then there are no attraction towards worldly objects (thus speaks Sankara in Sanatsujaatheeya bhashya).

A person is realized in this birth itself if he has the burning desire for liberation. Such a person will be ready to renounce everything in the world this very moment itself because for him realization is the first thing and realization has primary importance for such a person.

Those who say that “I have some duty” and after observing all duties, I will have the desire for liberation are all real fools & these people even if they claim that they have desire for liberation, their desire is not strong enough to overcome all worldly attachments. As long as there is even a single desire towards the worldly objects, the ultimate reality of Brahman cannot be realized. Only when all desires vanish, will there really be a burning desire for liberation. A person who has such strong desire for liberation will realize the Self in this very birth itself (of course birth and death too are empirical alone).

Practice of MUMUKSHUTVA or burning desire for liberation

A seeker should be ready to renounce everything in the world for the sake of liberation – it shouldn't take the seeker even a moment to do this for the sake of Self. This is really possible only when there is real vairagya and real attachment to the ultimate reality of Brahman or Consciousness or Self.

How is “adhikaaryartham” and “aanantharyartham” different? You claim that the seeker endowed with Sadhana Chatustaya is the perfect person for enquiring into

Brahman but still how is this different from “eligibility” and why do you categorize this into “immediate succession or after doing these”?

As we have already dealt, enquiry into Brahman cannot have any eligibility or “adhikaari” as it is the very nature of each and every person. But Brahman is beyond words and thoughts. If a person has to realize Brahman, then the foremost requirement is “purity of mind” which means introverted nature of the mind (the mind is not extroverted and hankering after sensual pleasures). If purity of mind is not there, then Vedantic study or enquiry into Brahman will not give the seeker the required benefit or fruit which is realization of one’s own nature of Consciousness or Brahman. This is what we call as “immediate succession”. Even though all are entitled to enquire into Brahman but that seeker alone who is equipped with the four-fold qualifications will realize Brahman. Others will not be able to realize the Self through enquiry into Brahman but will be stuck at some place – deluded by name, fame etc.

Therefore we stress that a person endowed with four-fold qualifications alone can really benefit out of the enquiry into Brahman. Any person can enquire into Brahman but only he who is endowed with these qualifications will be able to realize Brahman. This is why we say that ATHA or “Now” denotes “anantaryartham” or “after acquiring some qualities”.

Let us now analyze the second word of “Athah” or “therefore” in the first sutra of Brahma Sutra. “Therefore” means after other means have been tested out. Sankara says in his Brahma Sutra bhashya “athah sabdho hetvarthah” – “the word Therefore is denoting fruit or result”. Since the results of various karmas or actions are temporary, thereby a person tries to seek the eternal fruit through knowledge about Brahman – this eternal fruit being eternal bliss. A person tries to seek bliss first from normal means which are available to him. This is what happens in the world – thus we all try to get eternal bliss by doing various actions ranging from worldly routine to vedic karmas like Agnihotra. But when a person engages in these actions, he realizes that all these cannot confer eternal bliss unto him. Thus he realizes the futility of actions and takes resort to knowledge about Brahman as it is mentioned in the scriptures that through realization of Brahman alone a person gets eternal bliss and becomes immortal.

Thus after trying out various actions in the world, the seeker desires to enquire into Brahman. This is being pointed out through the word “Therefore” in the first sutra.

There are certain people in the world, so-called Brahmins, who very lovingly but foolishly cling to the vedic rituals like Sandhyavandanam, Agnihotra etc. and quote the Upanishads as well as Sankaracharya’s words for the same. They are all to be considered as fools because when the Upanishad as well as Sankara clearly mention that the fruits of all actions, whether it be normal brushing of the tooth or agnihotra, will lead one to more and more ignorance only as their fruits are temporary whereas the fruit of knowing Brahman alone is eternal.

Below is quoted Sankara’s bhashya on this word of “Therefore” wherein he quotes sruthi and explains about this clearly:

Yasmadeva agnihotraadeenaam sreya saadhanaanaa anityaphalathaam darshayathi – “Tadyatheh karmachitho lokas ksheeyatha evameva amutra punyachitho lokah ksheeyathe” (Chandogya 8.1.3) ityaadih.

Tathaa brahma vijnaanaadapi param purushartham darshayathi – “Brahma vid apnothi param” ityaadih (Taittiriya 2.1).

As various rituals like agnihotra etc. will all give temporary fruits alone as shown by the sutra and Upanishad thus “As the fruits of the actions over here are limited, so are the fruits over the other-world (here it means life after death and the worlds like svarga, vaikunta, kailaas etc.) are also temporary and will be destroyed or reduced to nil”, therefore enquiry into Brahman alone can confer eternal bliss as sruthi says “Knower of Brahman attains the SUPREME” – this is being pointed out through the word “THEREFORE” in the sutra.

We will deal more about Karma in the analysis of the fourth sutra wherein Sankara discusses Karma and Jnaana in detail.

Thus “NOW” means after getting the qualifications of Sadhana Chatustayam and “Therefore” means after trying out rituals and knowing that Brahman alone can confer eternal bliss which is being sought out.

Thus after being qualified and knowing that knowledge alone can give eternal bliss; a seeker should enquire into Brahman as knowing Brahman alone can confer eternal bliss. This is what is being explained in the third word “Brahma Jijnaasaa” which means “let us desire to know Brahman”.

What is Brahman?

Brihattvat brimhanattvaat ithi Brahma

That which is big and which is seen as the world is called Brahman.

Sruthi herself tells about Brahman in various ways in the scriptures. The very second sutra of Brahma Sutra gives the lakshana or qualification of Brahman. Let us see what Brahman is as per the scriptures:

Taittiriya Upanishad says

Yatho va imaani bhootaani jaayanthe

Yena jaathaani jeevanthi

Yad prayanthi abhisamvishanthi

Tad vijijnaasasva

Tad brahma ithi

That from which the world has been created, that in which the world exists and entering into which the world is destroyed, that is to be known – know that to be Brahman.

The above sruthi gives Brahman the various activities of creation, protection and dissolution. But these activities in themselves cannot be real because Brahman is that which is beyond words and cannot be expressed as this. Brahman alone is the entity in the world which hasn’t been expressed as such (objectified). Scriptures point out Brahman and even they are incapable of expressing about Brahman – that which is beyond words and thoughts. Brahman cannot be objectified because it is the Subject of all activities as the witness and substratum of all activities which are mere illusions in the reality of Brahman.

Kena Upanishad thus says

Yad vaacha anabhyuditam yena vaak abhyudathe
Tadeva tvam viddhi na idam yad idam upaasathe

That which cannot be expressed through words, that by which words themselves get the power of expression – know that to be Brahman – that is not Brahman which people tell to worship as “this”.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad speaks about Brahman through “neti, neti” process which is negation of all the objects both gross and subtle.

Acharyas have propounded that three types of explanations are possible for Brahman. These are

1. Vyaavritta lakshana – this is the process of neti, neti wherein Brahman is found separate from other objects by negating all objects until the Subject of Brahman alone remains behind. It cannot be objected that when everything is negated, it will lead to void because the Subject who is negating will still remain behind.
2. Thatastha lakshana – Brahman is explained as the witness of all the activities in the world. The world that sruthi and Gita uses for Brahman is Kutastha or changeless or avikaari. Kuta is anvil and as anvil never changes but changes other objects similarly Brahman is the witness of all activities and changeless. The most common example given for this lakshana is: when a person wants to know which house Devadatta is living in, the person is informed that the house above which a crow sits is Devadatta’s house. Similarly Brahman is pointed out as the witness of the three avasthaas of waking, dream and deep sleep.
3. Svaroopalakshana – this is the nature of Brahman. Brahman is of the nature of Sat or Existence, Chit or Consciousness and Ananda or bliss.

The first two lakshanas are instrumental or nimitta alone. They are not real but illusory alone. Witness-hood is there only when there are objects to be witnessed. When the entire spectra of objects are illusory, then the witness-hood of the Self also vanishes & Self remains behind as its very nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Thus Svaroopalakshana alone is real whereas other lakshanaas are all illusory only. Let us analyze the svaroopalakshana of Brahman

Puranaas says

Sachidaananda roopaya vishwotpatyaadi hetave

Taapatraya vinaashaaya sree krishnaaya vayam namaha

I prostrate that Sri Krishna who is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, who is the creator of the world & who removes the various obstacles and sufferings.

In the above sloka, svaroopalakshana is mentioned as Sat chit ananda. Thatastha lakshana is mentioned as the creator of the world – any creator is unaffected by his creation and remains beyond the creation. Similarly Brahman is the mere witness to the illusory creation of the world & he is not affected by the activities in the illusory world even as Sun is not affected by the activities on Earth. Brahman is mentioned

as remover of obstacles – this is vyaavritta lakshana (distinctive way of expressing). Brahman is different from all obstacles as Brahman is of the nature of Bliss which is beyond temporary happiness and sorrow.

SAT, CHIT and ANANDA

SAT is existence. Sat is that which exists beyond time.

CHIT is Consciousness. Chit is that which is self-luminous and experiences its own existence as "I-exist, I-exist".

ANANDA is bliss. Bliss is that which is perfect and poorna.

Brahman has to be SAT else it will be non-existent like a rock. This will go against sruthi and experience that "I never cease to exist". Brahman is of the nature of CHIT as Brahman is self-luminous and is that which experiences its own existence & gives existence to other illusory objects too. Brahman is of the nature of ANANDA as it is poorna or beyond all limitations. That which is limited will be destroyed at some point of time. That which gets destroyed will not be SAT as it doesn't exist for all the three times of past, present and future.

Are SAT, CHIT and ANANDA three different qualities of Brahman in which case it will be against Advaita theory itself?

No, SAT CHIT ANANDA are not three different qualities but they are the very nature of Brahman which is AKHANDA or without parts (or qualities).

That which is existent should experience its own existence else it will be insentient like the rock. An insentient entity doesn't have any existence unless illumined by a sentient entity. A rock has existence only when a conscious being perceives it. Thus if Brahman is only SAT and not CHIT, Brahman would be ASAT which is illogical as Brahman would then have contradictory nature of both SAT and ASAT (Asat is that which doesn't exist for the three times – absolute non-existence).

Thus SAT and CHIT go together or are not different qualities but different facets of the nature of Brahman.

Any existent entity alone can be of the nature of ANANDA as bliss is there only when an object exists. Therefore Brahman has to be of the nature of SAT and ANANDA both which are not different but one alone.

ANANDA can be enjoyed as perfect or full only when the entity experiences its own existence. Else ananda cannot be enjoyed even as rock doesn't enjoy ananda as it has no existence of its own. There is only one entity in the entire world which is capable of experiencing its own existence – that entity is CHIT or Consciousness. Therefore CHIT and ANANDA go together only.

Thus it is proved that SAT, CHIT and ANANDA are not three different qualities but the very nature of Brahman which is AKHANDA or without parts.

Brahman thus is of the nature of SAT, CHIT and ANANDA.

This Brahman is not different from the jeeva or limited self or Consciousness.

"I" never ceases to exist and hence it is SAT in nature. "I" always shines by itself and illumines the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. Therefore "I" am of the

nature of CHIT or Consciousness. "I" am the most loved object in the world & hence "I" am of the nature of ANANDA or bliss. Thus "I" am of the nature of SAT, CHIT and ANANDA.

Since Brahman is beyond all limitations – therefore there cannot be any object different from Brahman. If an object is assumed, it will be having a relationship with Brahman. Any relationship limits the objects that have relations. Thus Brahman will become limited. Also as Brahman is beyond words and thoughts, there cannot be any other entity which is also beyond words and thoughts as in that case comparison between those two objects will ensue which will make Brahman expressible through words and thoughts. Hence we can convincingly conclude that "I am Brahman" or the jeeva is Brahman alone and not different from Brahman.

Thus says Advaita Makaranda

Aham asmi sadaa bhaami kadaachit na aham apriyah
Brahmaivaaham tatah siddham sachidaanandam

I always exist and always shine. I am never unliked at any time. Therefore I am of the nature of Sat chit ananda and therefore it is proved that I am Brahman alone.

Sankara thus says in Brahmajnaanaavaleemaala

Brahma satyam jagan mithyaa jeevo brahmaiva na parah
Anena vedhyam sat shaastram ithi Vedanta dindimaa

1. Brahman is the ultimate and absolute reality
2. The world is only an illusion in the reality of Brahman
3. Jeeva is Brahman alone and not different from it.

With the above three points, truth about the reality is known – thus roars Vedanta.

Even though "I am Brahman", this reality has been veiled through ignorance which is termed as Avidya. Avidya has no beginning because it is not known when it started. If it is known when "I" was ignorant, this means "I" was aware of my ignorance at that time which would mean "ignorance" vanished (or should have surely vanished). Thus avidya has no beginning. But it is only an illusion in the reality of Brahman, therefore it has an end. It is ended by knowledge about the Self.

If it is asked what is the proof for Avidya, we say that avidya cannot withstand any proof as if it could withstand any proof then it will become an existent entity. Since it cannot withstand any proof, it is not an existent entity but just seems to exist temporarily.

If it is argued that "you claim that there is really no entity called avidya, then how do you claim that avidya is there and veils the Self", then we say that the answer is there in the question itself. Any question can arise when there is limitation or ignorance alone. Thus the question itself is testimony for the existence of ignorance. But this ignorance can never veil the self-luminous Brahman or Self. This becomes pretty clear when it is known that ignorance cannot withstand logic. Anything that cannot withstand logic is only an illusion. Any illusion never veils the reality but just seems to veil the ultimate reality of Brahman. When the reality is sought out, the illusion vanishes by itself (ignorance is never destroyed as it never existed: hence it is just sublated by knowledge of the Self).

If everybody is the Self, then why the enquiry into Brahman?

If a person has realized the Self, he will never come into the Vedas or Brahma Sutras. The very fact that a person has started to learn Brahma Sutras itself shows that there is ignorance. The question itself thus speaks about ignorance. Hence, enquiry into Brahman is not futile. It is not futile at the empirical level until the reality is not realized. When the reality is realized, even Vedas become illusory and at that time, no enquiry is required as only Brahman, one without a second, exists as one's own very nature.

Here an objection might be raised:

Is Brahman already known or not known? If it is the former (Brahman is already known), then enquiry is futile as the object of enquiry is already known. If it is the latter, then Brahman becomes unknown & is newly known. This newly known will surely vanish one day as per your system (as Sankara clearly states in his bhashyaas). Therefore both way enquiry into Brahman cannot be explained as per your system.

We answer thus as Panchadashi and Bhamathi put forth:

Brahman is not known as if it is known; thirst for worldly objects will not be there. Brahman is not unknown as if it is unknown, then a person will never search for it – but everyone is searching for Brahman in the form of bliss or eternal happiness.

Thus Brahman is not known specifically but known generally. Generally it is known as the object of eternal bliss but it is not known specifically as one's own Self. Vidyanaraya gives an example to illustrate this: a number of people are chanting together, amidst the number of people chanting there is a person's son. Since there are many people chanting, he is unable to identify his son's voice as such. But he is able to identify his son's voice along with other voices. Thus his son's voice is generally known but not specifically known.

Similarly the Self is not known specifically but generally known. The Self is not specifically not known because of ignorance or Avidya of one's own very nature of Self.

This differentiation of specifically not known but generally known is only valid at the empirical level for a seeker who says that "I am ignorant". From the ultimate or paaramarthika level, there is no ignorance and hence the Self is known as one's own nature (not objective but subjective). And since at that level, there is nothing apart from the Self, there cannot be any avidya to veil the Self. Thus there is no distinction as "specifically unknown" and "generally known". A seeker who has realized the Self will never come to learn Brahma Sutras (as there is no jijnasa for one who has realized the Self). But a person who comes to learn the Brahma Sutras hasn't realized the Self because if the Self is realized, the person becomes aapta kaama or completely-fulfilled and without any desire. Thus since the seeker who learns the Brahma Sutras has ignorance, therefore it has to be removed through knowledge about the Self. Thus when there is ignorance, the Self is not known but still known – this statement is irrefutable as is the experience of the seeker as well as the objector. For if the objector was realized, he would never raise any questions which mean there is either confusion or doubts or dual perception when Sruthi clearly says that once a person realizes, dual perception vanishes.

Thus it is futile enough if it is argued that “Nirvikalpa Brahman cannot have the distinction of being specifically unknown and generally known as the Advaitins claim” because we never admit such distinction to be real. We only say that such a distinction is found in a seeker who considers himself in bondage. We always stress that each and everyone is the Self alone – but this has been forgotten and thereby this distinction seems to be present. This distinction is not possible in Nirvikalpa Brahman as the objector says but it is possible as an illusion in Nirvikalpa Brahman even as a rich man seems to be a poor man in dream.

Thus a seeker has to remember that “desire to know Brahman” itself is only an illusion to come out of the big illusion of the world and bondage. It is like a person dreaming and a lion coming in the dream which causes the man to wake out of dream. It is those who don’t remember this main theory of Advaita and thereby attack that the theory of Advaita (which has its base in Vedanta and is not a new philosophy created by either Gaudapada or Sankara) is illogical.

Let us not deviate from the topic by discussion of futile arguments raised by other schools just for the sake of attacking and trying to prove by hook or crook that their theory alone is true whereas other theories are wrong.

Summary of the first sutra

The first sutra says that “Now, therefore let us desire to know Brahman”. It is only after attaining the four-fold qualifications or sadhana chathustayam that a person becomes eligible to apprehend the truth of the ultimate reality of Brahman. Also this enquiry becomes valid or useful only after all actions and other worldly means are known to be futile. Thus it is after going or trying out various karmas (both vaidika and vyaavahaarika) that a person comes to desire Brahman – the ultimate reality which cannot be achieved through karma or action.

This Brahman to be desired is not different from one’s own very nature but it is one’s own very nature itself. The difference or distinction between Brahman and jeeva is only the various limiting adjuncts of body and mind caused by ignorance. Ignorance itself seems to exist but has no real existence. It is removal of this non-existent but seemingly existent ignorance which is the aim of enquiry into Brahman or desire to know Brahman. When illusory ignorance is known to be non-existent, the seeker realizes that “I am Brahman” and therefore rejoices in the eternal bliss which is his own very nature.

Thus “desire to know Brahman” is to remove ignorance & never to achieve or attain Brahman as each and every person is Brahman only – not different from it.

Now, as a seeker said to create/have a desire to know Brahman, the next question will be “what is Brahman that is to be known”. This question of “what is Brahman” or the lakshana of Brahman is being explained in the second sutra which is the second adhikarana of Brahma Sutra.

Vaiyaasikhya Nyaayamaala or Adhikarana Ratna Maala

This is a short metrical work giving the essence of Sankara’s Brahma Sutra Bhashya so that the seeker can easily remember the reality. This is authored by Bharathi

Teertha and Vidyaranya. Each adhikarana is explained in two slokas in this work. The first sloka explains the purvapaksha, vishaya and sandeha. The second sloka explains the siddhanta paksha and sangathi. Thus all the five parts of an adhikarana is explained in two slokas.

As we have seen the first sutra of Brahma Sutra which is the first adhikarana, let us see the 2 slokas of this work so that we can by-heart and easily remember the import of the adhikarana.

1. Avicharyam vicharyam va brahma adhyaasaaniroopanaath
Asandeha aphilatvaabhyam na vicharam tadarhathi

Is Brahman to be enquired or not enquired (desired or not desired) as Adhyaasa (superimposition) has not been proved? Since Brahman is beyond doubts and is not a fruit to be attained, therefore Brahman is not to be enquired (enquiry of Brahman is not valid).

The Vishya or Object of the first sutra is Brahman – the ultimate reality knowing which everything is known – the only entity capable of conferring eternal bliss to the seeker.

The sandeha or doubt – whether Brahman can be enquired or cannot be enquired? Whether Brahman is an object of enquiry or not?

The purvapaksha or objection – Brahman is not to be enquired as enquiry of Brahman is invalid because Brahman is beyond doubts and is not a fruit to be obtained. Thus the scriptures or Vedanta Shaastra is futile and therefore study of the scriptures is not required.

It has to be noted here that Brahman according to Vedanta is beyond all doubts (as doubts are there only for the limited entity). Brahman is also not a fruit to be attained as any fruit is non-eternal whereas Brahman is eternal. Instead Brahman is to be realized as one's own very nature through knowledge rather than as a fruit through karma or action.

Bharathi Teertha answers the purvapaksha in the second sloka:

2. Adhyaaso aham buddhi sidhho asangam Brahman sruthi iritham
sandehaat mukthibhaavaatcha vicharyam brahma vedatah

Adhyaasa is known as the Ego sense of "I" and "Mine" whereas Brahman is said in the Vedas as Asanga or "detached" or "witness". Since there is doubt as to what is Brahman (whether it is the "I-Ego" or the pure "I" – whether it is one's own nature or different from oneself) and there is liberation or moksha from this knowledge about Brahman, therefore Brahman has to be enquired through the Vedas or Upanishads.

We all experience "I" as the body and mind. But really speaking, "I" is different from the body and mind. Thus Adhyaasa or superimposition of the Self on the non-Self (of body and mind) is self-established. Sankara in the adhyaasa bhashya says that "loka vyavahaarah" for adhyaasa meaning that adhyaasa is found in the normal empirical usage of all people. Brahman is mentioned as Asanga in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

as “Asango hi ayam purushah” – Detached is the ultimate reality of Brahman or Self as it is the witness of all illusions.

Thus the empirical usage of “I” being one with the body and mind whereas the Vedas tell that “I” is detached and Consciousness, therefore there is doubt over what is Brahman. Also since the seeker has come to learn this scripture, it is pretty much evident that he is unaware of the ultimate reality of Brahman as else he would not have even come to learn Brahma Sutras.

We all experience happiness and sorrow intermittently in life. Nobody whether it is a saint or a worldly person is saved from this dual experience. Moksha or liberation is going beyond both happiness and sorrow. Thus complete cessation of this empirical experience of duality of happiness and sorrow is termed Moksha in Vedanta. Moksha (eternal bliss) is not just mentioned in Vedanta but eternal bliss is the ultimate goal of each living being in the world. This Moksha or eternal bliss is achieved or attained only through enquiry of Brahman as Brahman alone is the non-changing and eternal entity in the entire world – all other things are continuously changing. Any changing entity cannot give eternal bliss as it itself will vanish after some time. Therefore, moksha is to be attained through enquiry of Brahman. Thus an enquiry into Brahman is made here through study of the scriptures which alone are capable of pointing out the ultimate reality of Brahman which is beyond words and thoughts as it is the Subject of all objects (illusory objects as the substratum of those illusions).

1.1.2 Janmaadyasya yathah

Janmaadi – Birth etc.

Asya – of the world

Yathah – from that conscious being,

“Tad Brahma” – That is Brahman

That from which the world has been created, that in which the world existed and that unto which the world gets merged or destroyed – that is Brahman.

The previous sutra mentioned about a desire to know Brahman. Once desire arises, then that which has to be known, Brahman, has to be explained which is being explained in this sutra. Thus this sutra gives the lakshana or characteristic of Brahman.

The sruthi that is being referred in this sutra is the Taittiriya Upanishad statement

“Yatho va imaani bhootaani jaayanthe

Yena jaathaani jeevanthi

Yat prayanthi abhisamvishanthi

Tad vijijnaasasva tad brahma ithi”

That from which the world has been created, that in which the world (consisting of the entire beings) exists, that merging or attaining the world is destroyed, that is to be known – known that to be Brahman.

Vedanta gives three types of Lakshanas or characteristics for any entity.

1. Vyaavritta lakshana – this way of expressing an entity is through differentiation from other entities. Brahman is explained in the

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as NETI NETI or Not this, not this where the entire not-Self is negated and what remains behind is Brahman or Self alone.

2. Thatastha lakshana – in this way of expressing, the entity to be expressed is explained on the basis of another entity (with respect to the other object). The simple example quoted for this type of characteristic is “the house on which the crow is sitting”. When a person asks another passer by as to which is the house of devadatta, the passer by answers that “the house on which crow is sitting is the house of devadatta”. Both vyaavritta lakshana and Thatastha lakshana are also temporary and not ultimate real because they are at the empirical plane and are based on the illusory world which has no real existence. Thatastha lakshana of Brahman is mentioned as the sakshi or witness of three state of waking, dream and deep sleep as well as “the substratum in which creation occurs, stays and gets destroyed”.
3. Svaroopalakshana – this is the real nature of the entity to be explained. Svaroopalakshana alone is really valid for Brahman because this alone explains Brahman without referring to the world or its objects. Svaroopalakshana of Brahman is SAT CHIT ANANDA or Existence, Consciousness and Bliss as the various sruthis explain it.

Since the analysis unto Brahman is from the empirical perspective, therefore Brahma Sutra gives the thatastha lakshana of Brahman rather than the svaroopalakshana. This is not a fault as such because this is as per Chandra shaakhaa nyaaya or arundhathi nyaaya. Chandra shaakhaa nyaaya is showing the moon to a child by first pointing to a nearby branch and then through the branch showing the moon. Arundhathi nyaaya is also similar only where the star arundhathi is shown by pointing nearby stars and then with respect to those stars, arundhathi is pointed out. Similarly, since the seeker is in the initial stage, he is first told about the world which he currently perceives and then he is told that the world exists in its substratum of Brahman – that from which the world came, that in which the world exists & that unto which the world merges at the time of destruction.

It cannot be objected here that since the svaroopalakshana of Brahman is not mentioned and the world is also mentioned while pointing to Brahman, the world is real and not unreal – because this has already been analyzed thoroughly and refuted in Satya Darshanam of the same author. To explain it briefly (to avoid redundancy, it is not being discussed in detail here), that which seems to exist in a substratum is nothing but an illusion in the substratum. Thus the world which was not there yesterday but was created and seems to exist today and will vanish tomorrow is nothing but an illusion in the ultimate reality of Brahman as its substratum. Any illusion is unreal from the ultimate viewpoint. Thus the world is not at all present in the ultimate reality of Brahman. This clearly shows that the current sutra is not just mentioning the thatastha lakshana but negating the dual world also in a very clear way.

Thus the sruthi is indirectly doing a double job here – that of explaining Brahman as well as negating the dual world too.

It cannot be argued that Brahman mentioned is VISHNU who is saguna and savishesha because the sruthi which is being referred here mentions Brahman as SATYAM JNAANAM ANANTHAM or Existence, Consciousness and INFINITE.

Existence doesn't have any quality associated with it even as space doesn't have any quality associated. If it is argued that there is pot-existence, room-existence etc. which are different from one another & hence quality is there – it is not so because

pot-space, room-space etc. are not considered as different but one only. And space is accepted as without any qualities by all systems. Thus existence also has to be accepted as without any qualities only.

Consciousness doesn't have any quality because quality is only for that which is an object – Consciousness is never the object because it is the Subject. If it is questioned as to that "how does Consciousness exist if it is the Subject", we say that Consciousness exists of its own as it is self-luminous and requires no other subject for its existence. Since Consciousness is without parts (as it is permanent and any object with parts is subject to change and thereby is impermanent), it doesn't have quality associated with it as only parts can have conjunctions with various objects that will qualify the entity of Consciousness. Also as qualifiers limit the entity, Brahman cannot have any qualities because it is mentioned as INFINITE or UNLIMITED.

It cannot be said that even though there are qualifiers, still the object is unlimited – because there is no proof for the same in the world.

Since Brahman is without any qualifications and attributes, it is NIRGUNA and NIRVISHESHA – thus it is not the chathurbhuja Vishnu.

We have to remember that the characteristic that the current sutra gives is only a temporary one and not the real characteristic. There cannot be any world in Brahman as Brahman is changeless whereas the world is changing – any changing entity cannot be present in the changeless substratum but it can only seem to exist in the changeless substratum due to superimposition. This is only an illusion and not a reality. Thus this lakshana is only meant to negate the world and show the substratum of Brahman.

We have to constantly remember that the Svaroop Lakshana of Brahman is SAT CHIT ANANDA or Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. These three are not different attributes of Brahman but these are the very nature of Brahman. All three cannot exist without each other & hence they all point out the AKHANDA or indivisible Brahman.

The Svaroop lakshana alone is real and the thatastha lakshana is only an illusion. Thus says Advaita Makaranda of Lakshmidhara

Chetyoparaaga roopaa me saakshitaapi na taatvikee
Upalakshanamevaayam nistaranga chidambudheh

Consciousness without any thoughts which is my nature and Witness-hood is only temporary and not real. Sakshitaa or Witness-hood is only a temporary lakshana of the waveless ocean of Consciousness.

The simple reason why Consciousness cannot have real witnesshood or creator-hood is that anything other than the Consciousness is only temporary as everything depends on Consciousness for its existence. If Consciousness is not there, there is no world or objects to witness. And the world and its objects are temporary and as they are dependent on Consciousness for their existence, they have to be illusions in the reality of Consciousness. Thus from the ultimate perspective, there is neither the world nor its objects. When there are no objects, then how can witness-hood be there or creator-hood exist??? As witness requires something to witness and creator

requires something to be created – and since there is nothing real apart from Consciousness, the witness-hood as well as creator-hood is only an illusion in the ultimate reality of Brahman or Consciousness.

Thus the reality is that there is no creation happening but only illusory creation seems to be created and seems to exist.

As we have already discussed, Brahma Sutras give the thatastha lakshana in this sutra to negate the world and to indirectly point out the reality from the perspective of the world which is being perceived by the seeker.

Vaiyaasikhya Nyaayamaala or Adhikarana Ratna Maala

3. Lakshanam brahmano naasthi kimvaa asthi nahi vidhyathe
Janmaaderanya nistatvaat satyaadescha aprasiddhatah

Does Brahman have any lakshana or definition as such or not? Brahman doesn't have any lakshana because birth, death etc. are from something else (Pradhaana or Prakrithi of Sankhya system) and as Satya etc. (Sat Chit ananda is being mentioned here) are not famous or well established.

4. Brahma nistam kaaranatvam syaat lashma strakbhujangavat
laukikaanyeva satyaadeenyakhandam lakshayanthi hi

As a chain has the characteristic of snake, the lakshana of Brahman is being the cause of the world that is currently perceived. Can't the various words like Sat etc. point out the indivisible Brahman (Akhanda Brahma) even in normal worldly usages? Yes, it does indicate (this is shown by the word HI).

The Subject or Vishaya in this adhikarana is "Lakshana of Brahman" (definition of Brahman).

The doubt or Sandeha is: Does Brahman have lakshana or not?

The objection or purvapaksha is: Brahman doesn't have any lakshana. As you say that Brahman has the thatastha lakshana of being the creator of the world and Svaroopalakshana of Sat, Chit and ananda etc. – this is invalid because creator, protector and destroyer of the world is possible with Prakrithi and not with Brahman. Regarding the usage of the words of Sat, chit and ananda are not established for Brahman. Also Brahman cannot be indivisible as that is also not established.

Thus both the lakshanaas of Brahman is not established and hence Brahman doesn't have any lakshana.

The answer or siddhanthapaksha is: Brahman even though cannot be the cause of the world as the world itself is unreal but as long as the world is perceived, Brahman can be and is the cause of the world. Thus the definition of Brahman as the creator, protector and destroyer of the world is valid. This is valid at the empirical level because world is perceived but still is an illusion. As the snake illusorily perceived in the snake has the characteristic of snake or has the characteristic of showing the snake, similarly Brahman has the very nature of "being the creator of the world etc." The one and only way to answer the question of the ardent seeker about the cause of the world is to tell that Brahman is the cause of the world & it is the very nature

or svabhaava (empirical nature or illusory nature) of Brahman to be the cause of the world. This answer is valid only until the seeker perceives the world and wants to really get an empirical answer to the existence of the world. The moment a seeker proceeds towards the reality, he is told that the world itself is only an illusion & hence Brahman is just the substratum of the illusory world. This "cause-ness" or "substratum-ness" of Brahman is only at the empirical level and not ultimate level. Thus this lakshana of Brahman is only the THATASTHA LAKSHANA and not SVAROOPA LAKSHANA. It isn't a problem accepting this at the empirical level because the world itself is not accepted at the paaramarthika level – so naturally, the "cause-ness" of Brahman also vanishes at that level.

Advaita Makaranda beautifully explains this by telling that the SAKSHI BHAAVA or witness-hood of the Self is not eternally real but only an upalakshana.

Chetyoparaaga roopaa me saakshitaapi na taatvikee
Upalakshanam eva ayam nistaranga chidambudheh

My very nature of Consciousness or witness, unaffected by the various thoughts, is not ultimately real. It is only a temporary lakshana of the Self which is the ocean of Consciousness without any waves.

Svayamprakaasha Yati in his Rasaabhivyanjika commentary on the above sloka says that this upalakshana is similar to the upalakshana of Brahman as the cause of the world.

The objection that SAT, CHIT etc. are not well famous and not worldly usage is wrong. Even in the case of worldly objects, these are valid and point out to the indivisible Brahman only. Any existence seen in the world is accepted by all systems of Vedanta as dependent on the existence of Brahman. Also Brahman is SAT, that which never ceases to exist. This SAT cannot be many as it is also CHIT or experiencer of its own existence. There is only one entity in the entire world which experiences its own existence – that is Consciousness. Consciousness is called Brahman in Vedanta (Prajnaanam Brahma). That Consciousness cannot be many has already been proved earlier. This means SAT or eternal existence also can be one only. This means that all the other existences in the world are nothing but names and forms of Brahman. This becomes very clear through the anvaya vyatireka yukti. Anvaya yukti means that if Brahman is there, everything is there. Vyatireka yukti means if Brahman is not there, nothing is there. Thus all the objects in the world point out to the ultimate reality of Brahman as pointed out by sruthi as "Sarvam khalu idam brahma", "Atmeva idam sarvam", "Sarvam brahma mayam" etc.

Upanishad also says thus:

Asthi bhaathi priyam roopam naamam cha ithi amsha panchakam
Adhyatrayam brahma roopo jagadroopo tatho dvayam

Any entity in the world has five amshaas or parts. These are:

1. Sat
2. Chit
3. Ananda
4. Naama
5. Roopa

The first three are the very nature of Brahman whereas the rest two are the nature of the world. This is very clear and experienced by each one of us because any entity in the world is existent because of Brahman as its substratum only. And the world is nothing but a name and form of the reality. This name and form is temporary and will vanish one day or the other but the substratum of Brahman never vanishes as it is eternal. As gold ornaments are nothing but names and forms of GOLD, similarly world is name and form of Brahman. Names and forms are not at all existent but only seem to be existent for some time (as a result of not realizing the underlying reality). Thus even though we may see gold chain as chain, the goldsmith sees them as nothing but GOLD alone.

Therefore SAT, CHIT etc. are valid in worldly usage as well as in the case of worldly objects also. Thus it is wrong to say that these are not known and cannot be depended upon.

Thus this sutra gives the THATASTHA LAKSHANA of Brahman as the substratum-cause of the illusory world as well as gives the SVAROOPA LAKSHANA of Brahman as SAT, CHIT and ANANDA.

1.1.3 Shaastrayonitvaat

SHAASTRAYONITVAAT – Since Brahman is the yoni or kaaranam or cause or womb of the scriptures, (therefore Brahman is SARVAJNA and is the ultimate reality).

Sankara in his bhashya gives two interpretations to the sutra. One interpretation has been given above – the other interpretation is as below:

Scriptures are the proof of Brahman or proof for the "cause-hood" of Brahman.

As per the second interpretation, Brahman can be known only from the SHAASTRAS or scriptures. Even though Brahman is one's own very nature of Consciousness, but still this reality can be realized only through the scriptures. Here the word "scriptures" doesn't mean "scriptural texts" because in that case it would deviate in the case of Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sadguru Mata Amritanandamayi Devi etc. Thus here "scriptures" mean the "truth in the scriptures" or "scriptural truth". Scriptures all speak about ADVITEEYA BRAHMAN. As Sankara has condensed the entire scriptures into a half couplet as "Brahma Satyam, Jagan Mithyaa, Jeevo Brahmaiva Na Parah", this is the entire summary or essence of the scriptures. The above summary can be split into three parts thus:

1. Brahma Satyam – Brahman alone is real
2. Jagan Mithyaa – the world of duality is unreal
3. Jeevo Brahmaiva, na parah – the individual Self or JEEVA is Brahman alone and not different from Brahman.

Thus it is very clear that for a person who is ignorant, there is one and only way to realize the Self – which is knowing the scriptural truth that "I am Brahman, one without a second".

The cause-hood of Brahman is very clear from the above summary of the scriptures. Since the world is an illusion and Brahman alone is real, Brahman has to be the cause of the world as the substratum of the illusion. This is what Taittiriya Sruthi

points out by telling that "That from which the world has come, that in which the world exists & that unto which the world merges – know that to be Brahman".

If it is asked that since the cause-hood of Brahman was already proved in the second sutra and hence this sutra is redundant, we answer thus: the previous sutra speaks just about Brahman being the cause of the world. This can be proved through inference without the help of scriptures. This sutra thus says that Brahman can be proved through sruthi alone & not through inference alone. Inference is based on perception and cannot objectify Brahman which is the Subject of all objects. Inference is also based on logic and sruthi says that "Brahman cannot be realized through logic".

Now, let us see the first interpretation of the sutra. Brahman is SARVAJNA or all-knowing because Brahman is the yoni or seed of the scriptures. Scriptures have come from Brahman only. Scriptures or Vedas have come from Brahman alone as Brahman alone is real and other things are illusory creations out of Brahman. Scriptures speak about anything and everything in the world. There is nothing that the scripture doesn't speak about. Even if it is astronomy or mathematics, the Vedas do speak about it & this is long before even the so-called science picked up these things. We all are aware that Vedic Mathematics is one of the most popular way of solving mathematic solutions and we see even people preparing for CAT (MBA) entrance learning Vedic mathematics. Bhatta Bhaskara, Jaimini among others have long before itself written treatises on astronomy and related fields - science has reached that state only now. We even find the mention of various bombs and other things in the Puranas and some parts of the Vedas.

Thus scriptures speak about anything and everything - they have an answer to everything under the Sun (worldly matters) and beyond the Sun too (spiritual matters). Thus scriptures can be said to be the source of all knowledge. Since scriptures come from Brahman, it is but true that Brahman should be all-knowing as it is the cause of the scriptures. The programming language of Java was initially developed by James Gosling (who is known as the father of Java). Thus we can very well say that whatever Java can do is known by James Gosling. Similarly since Brahman is the cause of the all-knowledge scriptures, Brahman has to be all-knowing. Since Brahman is all-knowing, it is the ultimate reality to be known by a seeker. This is because when Brahman is known, everything else becomes known as Brahman is all-knowing.

This sutra also points out the importance of scriptures to a seeker. Scriptures are inevitable for a seeker, whether they are in the form of works or in the form of Guru (living form of the scripture). It is impossible to progress in the path of spirituality without either of these. Until a person has access to the scriptures and a Guru, he cannot progress in the spiritual path because there should be some person to guide him in the right direction. This right direction is mentioned in the scriptures and the scriptural truth is propounded and passed on to the seeker by the Guru.

Thus Siva says to Parvathi in Guru Gita (which comes as a part of Skanda Purana):
Gururaadih anaadischa guruh parama daivatam
guroh paratharam naasthi tasmai sree gurave namaha

Guru is the beginning of everything in the world, yet he is beginning less; Guru is the ultimate God or truth; there is nothing greater than the Guru, I offer my prostrations to such a Guru.

This is the reason why AMMA says thus; "If God gets angry with a person, the Guru can save the person, But if Guru is angry with a person, even God cannot save him!!!".

Guru Maahatmya has been put forth by the Upanishads and Gita as well. Upanishad proclaims thus:

Tad vijnaanaartham sa gurumeva abhigacchet
Srotriyam brahmanishtam

To know the ultimate reality of Brahman, the seeker approaches a Guru whose two qualifications are "Well versed in scriptural truth" (Srotriya) and "Always immersed in the ultimate reality of Brahman" (BrahmaNistha).

Aachaaryvaan purusho veda

A person who has an acharya or Guru knows the reality (means he alone gets to realize the ultimate reality).

Gita says thus:

Tadviddhi pranipaathena pariprashnena sevayaa
upadeshyanthi te jnaanam jnaaninah tattvadarshinah

To know the ultimate reality of Brahman (knowing which all actions and results are burnt to ashes), seek a Guru, do service to him and ask questions to him - thus he will instruct you in the knowledge of Brahman (he being a person who knows the ultimate reality of Brahman).

Thus the scriptures are unanimous in saying that the reality of Brahman can be realized through the grace and teachings from the Guru alone. Here if a person raises the objection that saints like Ramana Maharshi, Mata Amritanandamayi Devi etc. have realized the reality without any Gurus – we have to remember that these are exceptional cases alone. These saints were never a baddha jeeva (bonded individual soul) but they were the ultimate reality of Brahman itself - as they are avatars of the Lord coming to the world to help out the normal people. Thus their case cannot be taken for normal seekers. Thus it is inevitable to progress in the path of spirituality without a Guru.

Through this sutra, Veda Vyaasa points out that the seeker cannot really progress without the help of scriptures and Guru. The sutra also points out that the ultimate reality of Brahman alone is the Sarvajna Ishwara and he is not an insentient entity or an entity which doesn't know anything but it is all-knowing and sentient. Whatever is there in the world is known through the Consciousness alone - this Consciousness is the knower of everything & is termed as Brahman in Vedanta. It being the cause (material as well as efficient) of the world is all-knowing and is propounded clearly in the scriptures. We have to remember here that scriptures have their validity only until a person realizes his own very nature of Brahman. As Brahman is the yoni or

source of the scriptures, once a person realizes Brahman the scriptures become invalid and useless. The scriptures also are invalid after realization because they also work at the empirical level only - they are valid only till ignorance is present in order to remove the illusory ignorance. But once a person realizes the ultimate reality of Brahman, there is no ignorance at all & hence there is no scripture to be learnt or known. This is what Sankara says in Vivekachoodamani thus:

Avijnaathe pare tattve shaastraadhisthu nishphalaah
Vijnaathe api pare tattve shaastraadhisthu nishphalaah

Without knowing the ultimate reality of Brahman, the scriptures are of no use.
After knowing the ultimate reality of Brahman also, the scriptures are of no use.

The above sloka means that if a person doesn't know Brahman through the scriptures, the scriptures are of no use because their very aim of point out the ultimate reality of Brahman as one's own very nature of Consciousness by removal of illusory ignorance about one's own nature. If the scriptures don't lead a person to this reality, then they are of no use.

After knowing Brahman, the seeker realizes that there was no ignorance, there is no ignorance and there will be no ignorance at all - as there is only Brahman, one without a second. Thus the scriptures are also as illusory as the entities in the world. Vedanta compares the Guru who is an embodiment of the scriptures as the dream lion which makes the dreamer to wake up from the dream. The dream lion is as illusory as the dreamer itself. Similarly the scriptures are also an illusion alone - they are just means to wake up from the illusory dream of ignorance.

But as long as the scriptures don't lead a person to waking up from the dream of ignorance, they are of no use at all. Scriptural knowledge is just a means of waking up the dreamer from the long dream of ignorance & to make the seeker realize his own very nature of Brahman. Scriptural knowledge is a just a prerequisite to contemplation of the reality of Brahman as one's own very nature. Scriptural knowledge helps a seeker to point out the reality as one's own very nature & removes doubts/confusions in the mind of the seeker regarding the reality. When the seeker knows the reality intellectually without any doubts, confusions and contradictions, he is able to contemplate on the reality at all times. This constant contemplation is what Vedanta terms as "nidhidhyaasana" or "anusandhaana" - when a seeker does this, the ignorance veil is completely removed & there is nothing but Brahman alone, one without a second.

Thus scriptural knowledge just helps a person in realizing his own very nature of Brahman - but it is not final in that scripture itself vanishes once the seeker realizes his own very nature of adviteeya Brahman. Scriptures have validity only as long as illusory ignorance seems to be present - once ignorance is known to be non-existence, scriptures also become non-existent.

But since the reality of Brahman is the Subject which is never objectified, it can be known only through the mirror of scripture and Guru. Thus Vyaasa points out in this sutra that a seeker can know the reality only the scriptures as scriptures are the means of knowing Brahman --- scriptures have validity and power because they have come from all-knowing Brahman.

Once a person learns about the ultimate reality of Brahman and that realization can happen through knowledge and knowledge alone, the doubt happens as to whether karma can lead a person to eternal bliss or not. Since Vedas speak about karma in many places & that karma leads to immortality, therefore knowledge is not the main purport of Vedas as well as knowledge cannot lead to eternal bliss whereas karma does lead to eternal bliss. This doubt and objection is anticipated by Vyaasa and answered in the next adhikarana which is Samanvayaadhikarana – it consists of one sutra and the bhashya on the sutra is a thorough analysis of karma and jnaana. Let us now see the fourth sutra – the last one in the chatussutri.

1.1.4 Tattu Samanvayaat

TU – But

TAT – that (Brahman through knowledge is the main purport of scriptures is known)

SAMANVAYAAT – through harmony of all the statements of sruthi (which point to Brahman alone).

The Vedas mention about karma being valid and leading to immortality. Thus it is wrong to say that Brahman is the cause of the world etc. as such a Brahman is not pramaanyam (proved through pramaanas). Moreover, Vedas mention about karma as final and ultimate.

The above purvapaksha (objection) statement is being refuted in the current adhikarana of Samanvayaadhikarana. The purvapaksha statement is refuted and the opposite stand is shown through the word “tu” or “but”.

Here Veda Vyaasa says that it is not correct to say that Brahman is not proved and that karma is ultimate as the entire Vedas speak about Brahman. Since all the statements in the Vedas speak about Brahman, there is harmony as to Brahman being the ultimate reality in most of the Veda statements.

Here we have broader topic of karma vs jnaana to analyze. Sankara’s commentary on this sutra is very vast and he deals with almost all the points regarding karma and jnaana. Before entering into the analysis of karma and jnaana, let us try to see the harmony in various sruthi statements. This harmony is the propounding of the same reality of Brahman. We have to remember that the reality propounded in the Upanishads is not Saguna, Savishesha Ishwara but Nirguna, Nirvishesha Brahman.

If Brahman possesses guna, then it is limited by the particular guna & hence anantha nature of Brahman is negated. This is against Taittiriya sruthi which speaks about Brahman as being infinite or anantha.

Objection: Anantha doesn’t mean that Brahman is beyond gunas but just means that Brahman is poorna in gunas.

Answer: The above is an objection raised by the dvaitins. Vyaasateertha says thus in his Taatparya Chandrika:

Deshatah kaalataschaiva gunataschaapi poornathaa
Brahmataa na tu bhedasya raahityam brahmataa ishyathe

Brahman is full in terms of time, space and guna – this is what is called as “Brahmataa” or being Brahman and “Brahmataa” is not “being devoid of differences”.

This objection is wrong as if there is something which is full in respect of some quality, it still becomes bound by the quality as it is associated with the particular quality. Also if we say that Brahman possesses quality, then it becomes susceptible to perception (of that particular quality) which goes against the various sruthi statements that propound that Brahman is beyond words-thoughts and is indescribable.

If we say that Brahman is full of qualities and full in space, then there comes duality of space and Brahman. Whenever there are two entities, there has to be some or the other relation between both. Thus there should be some relation between Brahman and space. Any relation causes limitedness – thus both Brahman and space become limited. This is against perception itself as we all know that space is unlimited. If it is claimed that Brahman is independent whereas space is dependent on Brahman, such an one-sided relation is possible only in the case of space being an illusion in the substratum of Brahman. Also independent entity is always the substratum of the illusion of dependent entity – a variable is always dependent on the constant & hence is only an illusion in the changeless constant. Thus if this argument is held, it only leads to advaita.

It cannot also be argued that even as space is never limited by anything but still maintains a relation with other things in the world because this analogy is not accepted by the dvaitin – and this concept of space seemingly limited by pot is clearly refuted by the dvaitins (madhva refutes this in his upaadhi khandanam).

Even if the dvaitin doesn't accept this but still raises the objection, the answer to this is that space is something which is created but Brahman is not at all created. Thus we cannot really compare space with Brahman as such. We can only say that Brahman is like space & not that Brahman is space. Even when space seems to be limited by pot, similarly the ultimate reality of Brahman just seems to be limited by different entities but is never limited at all as it is not at all related to anything. This is supported in the Brihadaranyaka statement of "Asango hi ayam purushah" – this Purusha is detached from everything.

Thus Brahman cannot be full in qualities or time or space but is beyond all the three as else those would limit the limitless Brahman.

Thus Brahman is Nirguna and Nirvishesha. It need not be thus said that the ultimate reality of Brahman is without form.

Since Brahman cannot have any kind of relationship with all creations which seem to be created from it, it is non-dual or adviteeya. This is supported by the chandogya statement "Sadeva soumya idam agre aaset – ekam eva adviteeyam" – O Dear! Sat alone existed prior to creation, one without a second.

Thus Brahman is devoid of any differences or bhedas. Brahman is also propounded as Prajnaanam or Consciousness. Since we never feel the non-existence of "I" or Consciousness, therefore it has to be concluded that this "I" or Consciousness is Brahman. Thus we all are Brahman – to be very precise, there is no "we" but only the ultimate non-dual reality of Brahman. Whatever seems to be existing in the world & as the world is Brahman alone.

The Ishavasya Upanishad (which is one of the oldest Upanishad and a part of the vaajasaneeyi samhita) speaks about the ultimate reality of Brahman or Lord being present everywhere.

Rig Veda speaks about the ultimate reality of Brahman as the one reality propounded as many by different saints.

The Rig Vedic hymn purusha sooktha speaks about the reality of Brahman alone present here and all creation having started from Brahman. Since Brahman is changeless and attributeless, no real creation is possible from it. Thus this creation explained in the Vedas is only an illusion like dream.

Mandukya Upanishad speaks about OM being Brahman and OM alone being present everywhere. The Upanishad goes to the extent of clearly specifying that whatever was, whatever is and whatever will be is Brahman. Even if there is something else beyond the three times of past, present and future, that also is mentioned as Brahman.

Thus it is very clear that sruthi harmonizes Brahman through statements in all the Vedas and Upanishads. As proved earlier, this Brahman is not saguna ishwara but nirguna Brahman – the one and only reality. This is what Veda Vyaasa says in this sutra that Brahman is proved as the ultimate reality beyond all actions in the sruthi (which harmonizes this reality through different statements).

An important concept of Advaita Vedanta is that the statements mentioning Brahman as Nirguna is real whereas those mentioning Brahman as having forms etc. is illusory. The common objection raised against this is that why not the other way is right – Brahman mentioned as having forms is real & Brahman as Nirguna is illusory & mentioned just for contemplation.

The above objection is wrong because it is logical enough to say that Saguna Brahman is mentioned for contemplation or meditation purposes whereas Nirguna Brahman is the ultimate reality – this mode of reaching the unreachable progressively is termed as Chandra shaakha nyaaya or arundhathi nyaaya (showing a child the moon through pointing a nearby branch of tree & then showing the moon through the tree – showing arundhathi through moving from nearby stars and finally pointing out arundhathi). This is logical because Saguna Brahman can be contemplated upon easily whereas contemplation of Nirguna is very tough indeed for seekers who haven't yet overcome the thought that "I am the body" as Lord himself explains in the 12th chapter of Gita (sloka 5). It also is logical enough to say that Brahman even though is really Nirguna but still is mentioned initially as Saguna for progressively leading the seeker.

Let us now see what is illogical in arguing that Brahman as Nirguna is illusory whereas Brahman as Saguna is real – Nirguna Brahman if mentioned for contemplation is not at all possible and moreover as discussed earlier, Saguna Brahman would limit the limitless Brahman.

Many acharyas have also shown that Bhedha or difference is something which cannot be logically explained. The simple reason why bhedha cannot be real is that it causes relativity. Relativity always has to be an illusion as it will cause mutual dependency error. Even if we accept the relation itself to be real, it cannot be true as then it would lead to the question as to which was created first. If it is answered that both

were present always, it leads against the sruthi statements which mention Brahman alone as being present before creation. Even without sruthi statements, it is not logical to accept that relativity is eternal – relativity always has an absolute entity as its substratum. Whenever we speak about an equation between two variables, there is always a constant which is the substratum of the equation. The equation has no existence at all without the constant. With the constant, the relativity is known as an illusion in the constant.

When we say that the bus is moving, this movement is relative to the ground and the stationary seer. This relativity of movement is thus dependent on the stationary or absolute road and seer. Thus here also it proves that relativity is dependent on an absolute.

Just to sum up, relativity leads to infinite regression and mutual dependency errors – hence we have to accept an absolute beyond all relativity.

Therefore bhedha which is relative is only an illusion in the absolute reality of Brahman.

Katha Upanishad thus speaks about bhedha

Manasaiva idam aapthavyam neha nana asthi kinchana
Mrityoh sah mrityum aapnothi ya iha nana iva pashyathi

The ultimate reality of Brahman is to be known through a pure mind (a pure mind is one which is devoid of thoughts – mind is but thoughts – thus a pure mind is a non-mind or devoid of mind – thus Brahman can be known when the mind vanishes). Know for sure that there is no duality at all here. He who sees duality as if existing goes from death to death.

The word of iva (like) is used with nana (difference or duality) – this word is added to show that there is no real duality even though a person might see duality. It is only seemingly appearing duality. If a person sees duality as though existing (sees duality as existing or duality which never really exists), then he goes from death to death. Death to death here means that he is always engrossed in the vicious circle of birth and death. This circle of birth and death causes sorrows and sufferings. It is but the aim of all beings to get rid of sorrows & rejoice in eternal bliss. This is only possible when dual perception is known to be an illusion & that non-dual reality alone is real.

It may be argued here that Sankara says in his bhashya on the above sloka that IHA (here) in NEHA NANA ASTHI KINCHANA or there is no duality here – means in Brahman and not in world as we have explained above.

Even if go by Sankara's commentary, no difference in Brahman means that all differences are negated in Brahman. This means that all the three types of differences of internal, external-similar objects and external-dissimilar objects is negated in Brahman. This only proves that Brahman is the non-dual reality as there is nothing other than Brahman as per this explanation.

Thus sruthi speaks about bhedha as being completely unreal and abhedha adviteeya Brahman alone as real. This is also very easily proved through relativity-absolute as we have already discussed.

Thus the sruthi speaks about Brahman as being Nirguna, Nirvishesha and Adviteeya (non-dual).

Having proved that Brahman as one's own very nature of Consciousness is nirguna, nirvishesha and adviteeya, we will now enter into the analysis of karma and jnaana.

Vedas are split broadly into two parts – the karma khanda dealing with various rituals & the jnaana khanda dealing with knowledge. The darshana which speaks about karma being final and giving liberation or eternal bliss or immortality is called Purva Mimamsa. The darshana or philosophy which speaks about jnaana as being final is called Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta.

Purva Mimamsa (called as mimamsa in general) says that jnaana khanda leads to karma khanda which alone is real whereas Vedanta says that Karma khanda leads to jnaana khanda which is real and which alone can give eternal bliss.

Karma is always performed by a seeker in certain conditions or environment or situations. Since environment is always limited, therefore karma or action is always limited. Also actions are always limited by space, time and causation (causation of the fruit of karma). Because of the aforesaid reasons, karma is always limited. Since karma is limited, it cannot give unlimited results. Limited action can give limited results only. Since moksha or liberation or eternal bliss is unlimited, therefore karma cannot give eternal results.

Wherever sruthi mentions eternal fruits achieved by karma, we have to understand that this eternality or immortality is only with respect to the current condition or current limited situation. Compared to the time period manushyaas have, devas have a longer time period. Thus comparatively, devas are eternal or immortal. But the devas are mortal considering Brahma or Vishnu. Brahma or Vishnu are mortal considering the ultimate reality of Brahman. Thus we have to understand that the sruthi statements which propound immortality through karma as pointing out relative immortality and not absolute immortality. Moreover we have to understand that these statements are arthavaadas (mere false statements given to make people do actions) as these are refuted in the various upanishadic statements & is known as false through the lives of the devas, trimurthis etc. in the puranas.

Karma can have four types of results. These are as follows:

1. Utpatti
2. Aapthi
3. Samskrithi
4. Vikrithi

Utpatti

There are certain karmas which produce new results or that which ensues in original or creation of new entities. This is what is called as utpatti or origination. An example for this same

Aapthi

There are other karmas which make a person attain something which he currently doesn't have. This is called as Aapthi. An example of the same is attaining svarga as a result of yajna.

Samskrithi

Some karmas lead to purification of the mind. This is called as Samskrithi or purification. An example of the same is doing pooja to the Lord which leads to purification of the mind.

Vikrithi

Certain actions lead to modification – this is called as Vikrithi or modification. For example the mud is modified into a pot – this is a case of modification of the mud. But this same example can be shown to prove that a new entity called pot is created whereas mud is modified from one form to another.

Let us now try to see whether Brahman can be achieved through any of these actions. This reality of Brahman is not accepted as such by Mimamsas but everybody expects permanent result – thus this entity or reality of Brahman is eternal. “Eternal” is the main criteria to determine whether the above four types of karmas as per their fruits will be able to give Brahman.

Utpatti – whatever is originated or created will surely die as birth-death are two sides of the same coin. Thus Brahman got through origination will die – thus such a Brahman will not be eternal. Therefore utpatti cannot lead to the eternal Brahman.

Apthi – whatever is attained also will be lost as it is not in the nature. Thus Brahman which is attained after some time and is possessed for some time will be lost afterwards. This also would make Brahman temporary – thus apthi also cannot lead us to the eternal reality of Brahman.

Samskrithi – purification means removing impurities – this means Brahman is filled with impurity – anything that has impurity cannot be eternal. Also since removing impurity which is part of Brahman means impurity can again stick to Brahman. Such a Brahman susceptible to impurities will not be able to give eternal bliss. Thus Brahman of the nature of eternal bliss cannot be achieved through samskrithi.

Vikrithi – modification means change of form. Change is one of the six types of changes and this would mean that the entity will finally die. Thus changing Brahman will die and cannot be eternal. Thus vikrithi also cannot lead us to eternal Brahman.

Thus action cannot lead us to the eternal reality of Brahman. Only jnaana or knowledge can lead us to eternal state or immortality.

Sureshwaracharya summarizes the above analysis of karma in a single sloka in naishkarmya siddhi thus:

Utpaadhyam aapyam samskaaryam vikaaryam cha kriyaa phalam
Naiva mukthiryaathastasmaat kriyaa tasyaiva na saadhanam

Origination, attainment, purification and modification are the fruits of karma. Since mukthi or eternal state is not possible through these, therefore karma is not a means to liberation or moksha.

We can also prove that karma is limited from a different perspective which Sankara gives in his brahma sutra bhashya.

Karma is karthutantram whereas jnaana is vasthutantram. Karma depends on the kartha whereas jnaana depends on the entity or vasthu alone.

A kartha has three options with regard to any action – karthum akarthum anyathaakarthum vaa shakyah. A doer can chose as to i) do the action, ii) not do the action or iii) do it in a different way than is mentioned.

Since karma depends on the kartha, therefore each and every person can decide on what to do and how to do. This cannot lead to eternal reality as the reality itself can be predefined by any doer. But jnaana depends only on the entity. A person is gaining knowledge or “sight” of the pot – this depends on the pot alone. If the pot is there, then the person will see. Yes, there is always the factors of eyes etc. but those are small compared to the object. But in the case of karma, it is fully dependent on the kartha alone. Jnaana is dependent on the entity and hence if a person has the prerequisites to jnaana, he has no choice but to realize the reality of Brahman. The prerequisites in the case of knowledge of pot would be good eyes, contact of eyes with pot etc. In the case of jnaana of the ultimate reality of Brahman, the prerequisites are sravana, manana and nidhidhyaasana.

Sankara thus says in Upadesha Sahasri:
Dehatma dheevad brahmaatma dheedardye
Bhavat yasya sa na icchan api vimuchyathe

A person who has the strong concept or feeling that I am Brahman even as an ignorant person has the strong feeling that I am the body, he gets liberated even if he doesn't want it.

Thus we have seen that karma can never lead to eternal state whereas jnaana alone leads to the ultimate reality of Brahman. All the scriptures point to the ultimate reality of Brahman alone & that this reality is realized through knowledge alone.

Purusha sookta says
Tameva vidhvaan amrita iha bhavathi
That knower of the reality alone attains immortality.

Kaivalya Upanishad says
Tameva viditvaa atimrityum atyethi na anyah panthaa vimuktaye
Knowing that reality alone a person attains immortality, there is no other path to liberation.

Gita says
Sarvam karma akhilam paartha jnaane parisamaapyathe
O Arjuna! All actions end in jnaana.

Yatha edhaamsih sammidhognih bhasmasaat kuruthe arjuna
Jnaanaagnih sarva karmaani bhasmasaat kuruthe tathaa

As fire burns firewood into ashes, similarly all actions are burnt in the fire of knowledge, O Arjuna.

Ithi the jnaanam aakhyaatham guhyaat guhyataram mayaa
Thus I have propounded knowledge to you O Arjuna, the most secret one.

Sankara says thus in Vivekachoodamani:

Chittasya shuddhaye karma na tu vasthoopalabdhaye

Vasthu siddhir vichaarena na kinchit karma kotibhih

Actions are only for purification of the mind and not to realize the reality (vasthu). Realization of the reality happens only through VICHARA or Self-enquiry and not through crores of karma.

Ramana Maharshi says thus in Upadesa Saram:

Karthuh aajnayaa praapyathe phalam

Karma kim param karma tad jadam

All actions are ordained by the Lord & hence karma is not superior and karma is insentient.

Since karma is insentient and cannot give the eternal fruit of moksha in the form of Brahman, therefore the scriptures (which give the fruit of moksha) propound jnaana or knowledge alone. Thus all the scriptural statements are proved to be in harmony with each other in respect of moksha or realization of Brahman being achieved through knowledge and knowledge alone.

Conclusion

With this we come to the end of this concise explanation of the first four sutras of Brahma Sutras. As mentioned earlier, an understanding of the first four sutras is equivalent of understanding the entire Brahma Sutras as these four are the essence.

We should always try to contemplate in our mind that everything is Brahman and Brahman alone exists. With a mind devoid of doubts (cleared of doubts through a crisp understanding of the first four sutras of Brahma Sutra), we will very easily be able to contemplate on Brahman. The more we are able to contemplate on Brahman, the more ignorance veil will be removed. And when ignorance is completely removed, we will be able to abide as our very nature of blissful Brahman. The goal of life is to ever rejoice in bliss (eternal bliss) and this can be achieved through knowledge and knowledge alone – the knowledge that the “I” which pulsates inside us as “I-exist, I-exist” is one with non-dual reality of Brahman.

Vadanthu shaastraani Yajanthu devaan

Kurvanthu karmaani Bhajanthu devathaah

Atmaikya bodhena vina vimukthir

Na siddhyathi brahma shathaanthare api

Scriptures are spoken; devas are being propitiated through yajnas; actions are being performed; singing of names of deities is being done; But without the knowledge that the Self inside me (in the form of I-exist, I-exist) is one with non-dual reality of Brahman, there will not be any relief from the bondage of sorrows; not even in hundred life spans of Brahman (which is a huge number of years).

May this brief analysis of the first four sutras of Brahma Sutras give us conviction about Brahman and make us realize our very nature of Brahman. Since Brahma Sutras are considered tough to learn, let us try to go through this again and again until we gain proper conviction about Brahman and until we are able to ever rejoice in bliss. May the ultimate reality of Brahman bless us to achieve this goal of moksha.